



SCOUT LAKE MULTIPLE TIMBER SALE PROJECT NEWSLETTER

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MONTANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES AND CONSERVATION (DNRC)

Welcome to Swan River State Forest's first newsletter for the proposed Scout Lake Multiple Timber Sale Project. In this newsletter we would like to highlight our project objectives, update you on project development since the scoping period, introduce the Interdisciplinary Team (ID Team) and decisionmaker, summarize issues that were identified during the scoping period, and inform you of further opportunities to comment on the project.

PROJECT DEVELOPMENT

PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- Restore/maintain biodiversity by moving forest stands towards historic covertime conditions and species composition.
- Improve forest health and productivity by addressing insect and disease issues.
- Meet the sustainable yield for Swan River State Forest in order to accomplish the long-term ecological objectives for Swan River State Forest, to maximize long-term revenue for the Common school trust, and to support sustainable local communities.
- Develop and improve the transportation system and infrastructure for long-term management, fire suppression, and public access.
- Improve water quality by removing and rehabilitating sediment point sources, and to meet *Best Management Practices* (BMPs) on all project roads, including haul routes to Highway 83.
- Reduce fuel loads and wildfire hazards by decreasing ground and ladder fuel loads.

ID TEAM

Under the guidance of the *Montana Environmental Policy Act* ([MEPA], MCA 75-1-201), DNRC uses an interdisciplinary approach when planning timber sale projects and analyzing potential effects of these projects on the natural

and human environments. During the initial stages of project development, DNRC formed the Scout Lake ID Team. The ID team consists of several resource specialists trained in various disciplines that are closely related to a

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ID TEAM (continued)

project under consideration. The ID team assists with determining the relevant issues, assists with development of project alternatives, assesses the existing environment that may be affected by the project, assesses the potential impacts of each alternative, and recommends measures to avoid or mitigate impacts of the project alternatives.

The ID team for this project is made up of the following individuals:

- Swan River State Forest - Dan Roberson, Unit Manager, Scout Lake Project Decisionmaker; Karen Goode, Management Forester, Scout Lake Project Leader
- Northwestern Land Office - Marc Vessar, Hydrologist; Garrett Schairer and Chris Forristal, Wildlife Biologists

- Forest Management Bureau - Jeff Schmalenberg, Soil Scientist; Jim Bower, Fisheries Biologist; Ross Baty, Wildlife Biologist; Jordan Larson, Resource Economist; Tim Spoelma, Silviculturalist; Sonya Germann, MEPA Coordinator; and Mike O'Herron, Forest Management Planner

PUBLIC SCOPING

Beginning April 16, 2010, DNRC conducted a 30-day initial scoping process for the Scout Lake Multiple Timber Sale Project. We received input by letter, e-mail, and/or phone contact from 5 individuals, 2 organizations, and 2 government agencies.

ISSUE DEVELOPMENT

After reviewing the responses received during the public scoping period, the ID Team identified 67 issues. The ID Team determined which issues would be analyzed in detail or eliminated from further analysis. The issues to be analyzed in detail were determined to be relevant and within the scope of the project and, therefore, would be included in the impacts analysis. Issues that were eliminated from further analysis were determined to be beyond the scope of the project.

The ID Team developed the following issue statements that will guide the analysis for each individual resource and the development of the alternatives associated with this project.

"After reviewing the responses received during the public scoping period, the ID Team identified 67 issues."



VEGETATION

Harvest activities may affect:

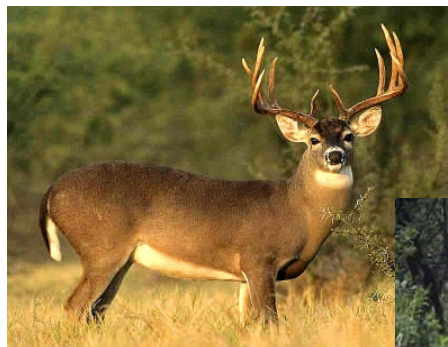
- forest covertypes through species removal or species composition change;
- age classes through tree removal;
- forest stocking levels through tree removal;
- forest canopy coverage through tree removal;
- forest fire conditions, levels, and hazards through tree removal and fuel reduction;
- forest insect and disease levels through tree removal (both suppressed/stressed and infested/infected);
- forest old-growth amounts and quality through tree removal;
- patch size and shape through tree removal resulting in fragmentation;
- sensitive plant populations through ground disturbance;
- noxious weeds through ground disturbance;
- coarse woody debris through resulting reductions or increases in amounts; and
- forest snag amounts and distribution through snag and potential snag-recruitment removal.

WILDLIFE

The proposed activities could:

- result in changes in the distribution of different covertypes on the landscape which could affect wildlife;

- alter the representation of stand age classes on the landscape which could affect wildlife;
- affect wildlife species associated with old-growth forests by reducing the acreage of available habitat;
- result in disturbance or alteration of forested corridors and connectivity, which could inhibit wildlife movements;
- reduce forested cover, which could adversely affect habitat linkage for wildlife;



- result in changes in patch size and shape and cause fragmentation of interior forest habitat for wildlife;
- reduce the number and distribution of snags, which could adversely affect species closely associated with these habitats;
- reduce levels of coarse woody debris, which could adversely affect species associated with these habitat attributes;
- result in the alteration of lynx foraging, denning habitat, and suitable habitat,

rendering it unsuitable for supporting lynx;

- result in a reduction of hiding cover that is important for grizzly bears, which could result in: 1) increased displacement of grizzly bears, 2) avoidance of otherwise suitable habitat, and/or 3) increased risk of bear-human conflicts;
- result in an increase in the density of roads, which could result in increased displacement of grizzly bears and increased risk of bear-human conflicts;
- result in a decrease in secure areas for grizzly bears, which could result in increased displacement of grizzly bears;



- result in disturbance of wolves at denning or rendezvous sites, which could lead to pup abandonment and/or risk of mortality;
- result in reduced habitat quality on winter range for white-tailed deer and elk, which could lead to reduced prey availability and reduce the potential for the area to support a wolf pack;

- reduce bald eagle nesting and perching habitats and/or disturb nesting bald eagles;
- alter flammulated owl habitat by reducing canopy closure and increasing tree spacing, but could remove snags needed by flammulated owls for nesting;
- displace adult common loons from nest sites and/or disturb nesting loons, reducing loon productivity;
- reduce the amount and/or quality of fisher habitats, which could alter fisher use of the area;
- reduce suitable nesting and foraging habitat for pileated woodpeckers, which could alter pileated woodpecker use of the area;
- remove forest cover on important winter ranges, which could lower their capacity to support white-tailed deer and elk;
- remove elk security cover, which could affect hunter opportunity and local quality of recreational hunting.

WATER RESOURCES

- Timber harvesting and road construction has the potential to increase water yield, which, in turn, may affect erosive power, sediment production and stream channel stability.
- Timber harvesting and road construction may increase sediment delivery into

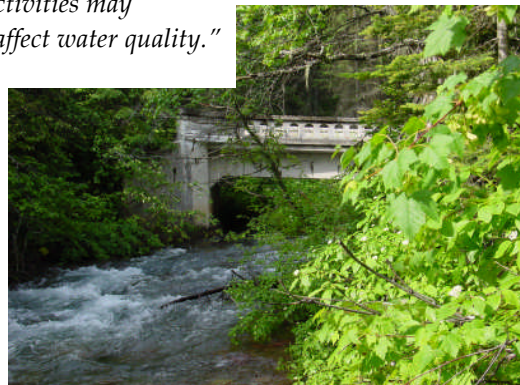
streams/lakes and affect water quality.

- Timber harvesting activities may adversely affect water quality by reducing shade and increasing stream temperatures.
- Project activities may adversely affect water quality.

SOILS

- Activities associated with the project may detrimentally affect soils resulting in impacts to long-term soil productivity.
- Road construction and timber harvesting activities may increase surface erosion, which may have an adverse affect on long-term soil productivity.
- Timber harvesting activities associated with the proposed actions may cumulatively affect long-term soil productivity.
- Activities associated with the proposed actions such as timber harvesting and road construction have the potential to increase slope instability through increased

"Project activities may adversely affect water quality."



water yields, road surface erosion, and impact long-term soil stability.

ECONOMICS

- The failure to complete an adequate economic analysis in the past has created an inflated view of the value of logging over other positive economic assets found on the forest.



Revenue from timber sales on State trust lands help support schools such as the Swan Valley Elementary School.

- The selling of timber at a time when prices are low may not benefit the trust.

FISHERIES

- The project may affect fish habitat by modifying flow regime, sediments, channel forms, riparian function, amounts of large woody debris, stream temperature, stream nutrients, and stream connectivity.
- The project may affect fish populations presence and genetics.

VISUAL AND AUDITORY RESOURCES

- Activities associated with this project may adversely affect local viewsheds and scenic vistas.
- Activities associated with this project may increase local noise levels.

RECREATION

Activities associated with the project may:

- adversely affect hunting and recreational activities in general;



Bicyclists enjoying the outdoors.

- adversely affect hunting and recreational activities, which may decrease the economic potential of the area;
- increase recreational motorized access within the project area.

AIR QUALITY

- Dust produced from harvesting activities, road building and maintenance, and hauling associated with this project may adversely affect local air quality.
- Smoke produced from logging slash piles and prescribed burning associated with this project may adversely affect local air quality.

CULTURAL RESOURCES

Given the size of the project area a full scale cultural resource inventory may be necessary.

“These issue statements could change as project development and public comment periods continue.”



DID YOU KNOW.....

Under the direction of the *State Board of Land Commissioners (Land Board)*, the Department manages timber, surface, and mineral resources on Sate trust lands for the benefit of the common schools and other endowed institutions in Montana. The Land Board consists of Montana's 5 top elected officials: Governor, Superintendent of Public Instruction, Secretary of State, Attorney General, and Sate Auditor.

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Another newsletter will be written in the spring/summer of 2011.
- The DEIS will likely be available for public review during the fall of 2011, when individuals will have another 30 days to review and submit comments.

PUBLIC FIELD TOUR

The ID Team, Forest Management Bureau Chief, and Decisionmaker hosted a field tour on October 20, 2010 to visit portions of the proposed project area. Attending this tour were 3 individuals from the public.

The field tour visited stands in and adjacent to proposed harvest units. The stops included:

- An old growth stand proposed for harvesting in designated areas but not throughout the entire stand to remove lodgepole pine with mountain pine beetle infestations and to create openings for seral species regeneration
- An area harvested in 2005 which shows a range of harvest treatments (seed tree,

shelterwood, and commercial thin) across the area. Retention patches of advanced regeneration were also retained for cover and structure diversity

- A thinned and unthinned regenerating stand indicative of DNRC's desired future conditions and potential thinning projects in areas where the density of saplings is exceeding the desired amount
- A ponderosa pine stand proposed for a maintenance/restoration treatment to remove the encroaching Douglas-fir and other shade tolerant species.

Some questions that arose during the field tour include:

- Do we have the flexibility to adapt marking guidelines as conditions change such as mountain pine beetle spread in the lodgepole pine?
- Is there pre-commercial thinning associated with this project?
- Has there been any lynx habitat issues raised with this project?

Comments from the tour were recorded and incorporated into the issue statements that will assist the ID Team in developing the analyses for each resource and the range of alternatives.



Shelterwood with regen in openings.



Douglas-fir seedtree with group retention.

FIELD RECONNAISSANCE

Since the initial stages of project development, the ID Team has been making multiple visits to the proposed project area to accurately assess the condition of the resources that may be affected by the proposed project. Such assessments are critical in further identifying and describing potential issues, developing a range of reasonable alternatives, describing potential environmental consequences on the affected resources, and developing appropriate measures to avoid, minimize, or mitigate impacts of the proposed action. The types of information collected during field evaluations include, but are not limited to:

- Assessing presence or absence of fish species in streams in the project area.
- Assessing the presence of old-growth forest.
- Assessing existing levels of snags and downed logs.
- Identifying historic skid trails in previous harvest units to assess cumulative impacts on the soils resource.
- Identifying routes of connectivity important to various terrestrial species in the project area.
- Assessing insect and disease risks to stands in the project area.
- Identifying sediment-point sources that are affecting, or could affect, water quality in the project area.



Stand proposed for group selection/commercial thinning.

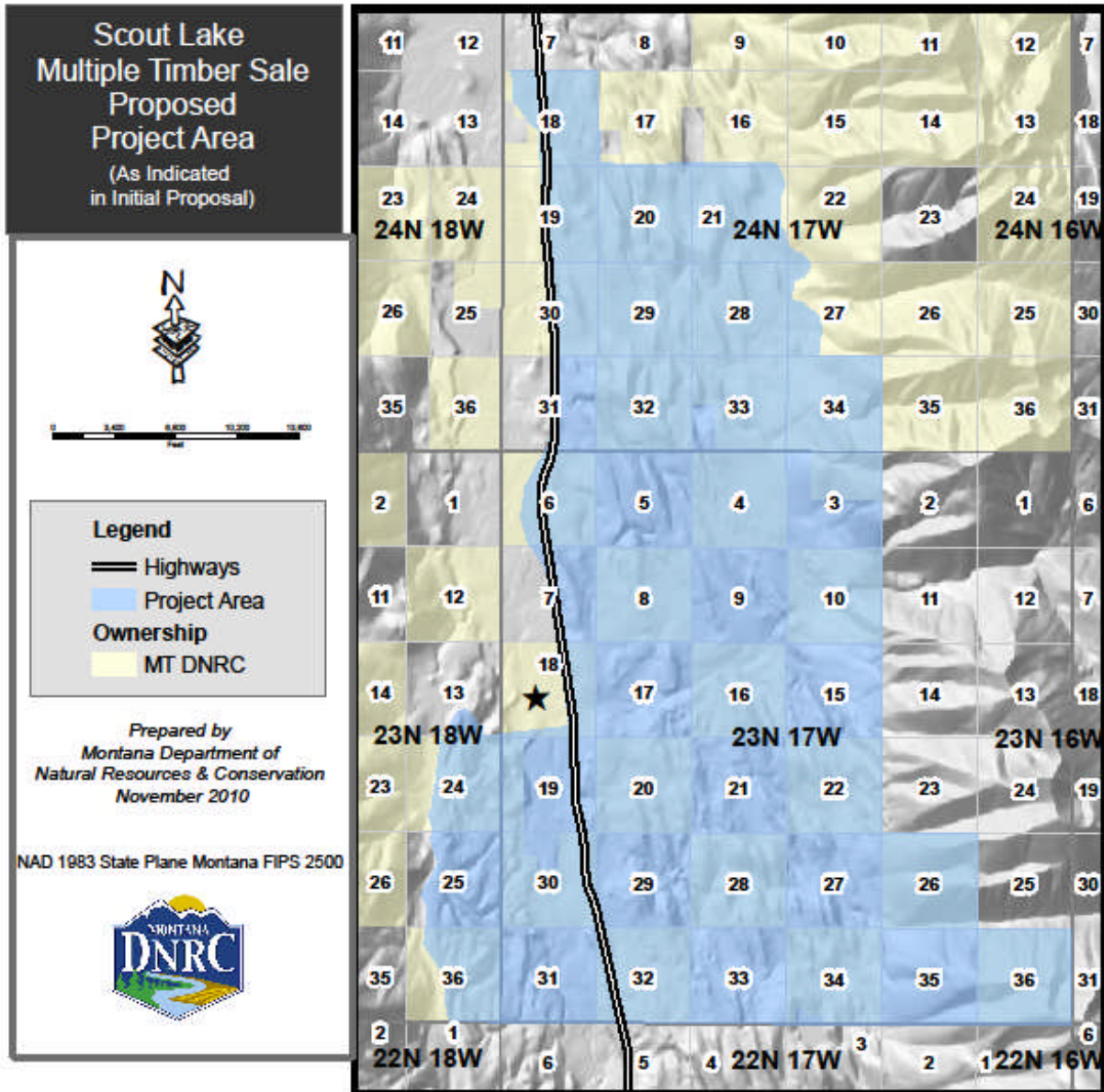


Area proposed for shelterwood treatment.

PROJECT CHANGES

The initial proposal included the following sections in the project area: Sections 3, 6, 8, 10, 18, 19, 20, 22, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, and 36, Township 23 North, Range 17 West; Sections 18, 19, 20, 21, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, and 34, Township 24 North, Range 17 West; Sections 24 and 36, Township 23 North, Range 18 West; and Section 36 Township 24 North, Range 18 West.

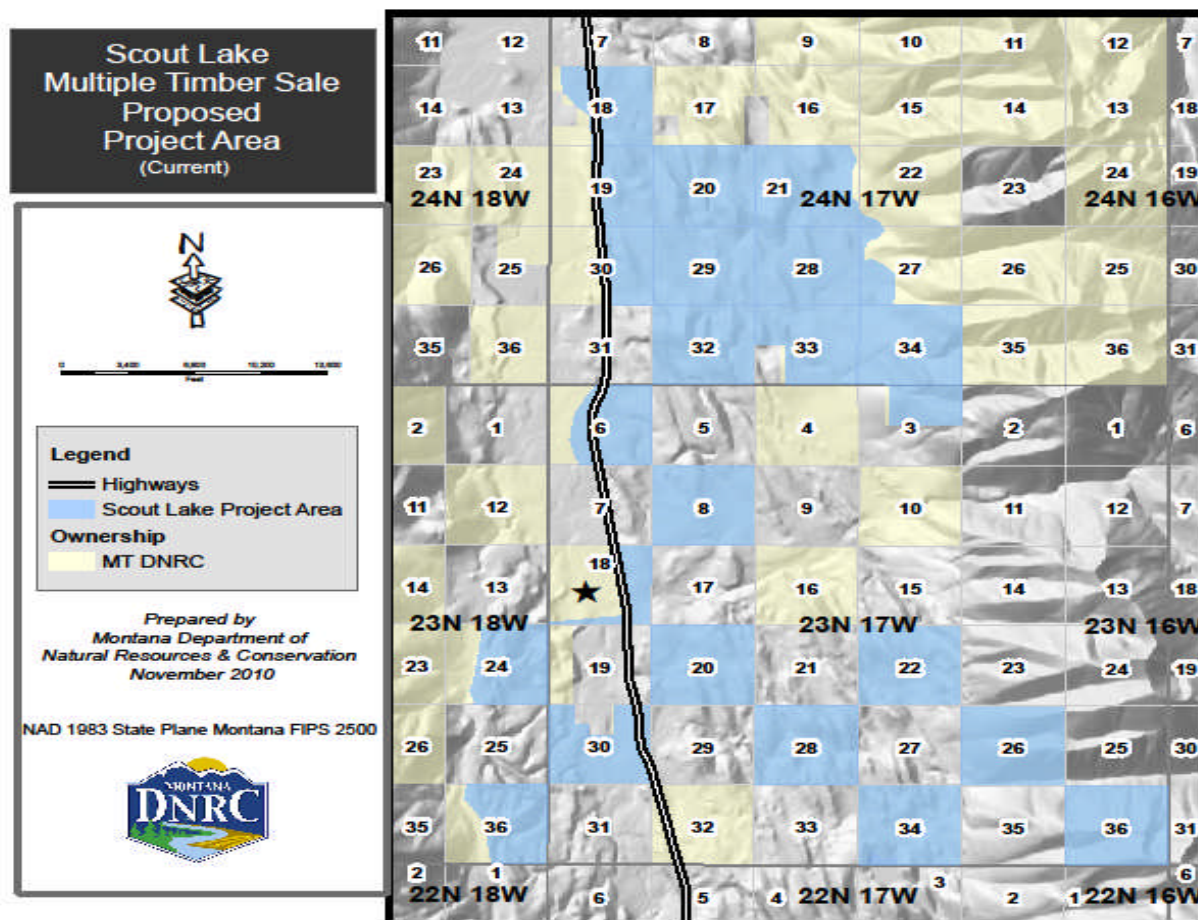
FIGURE 1 - SCOUT LAKE MULTIPLE TIMBER SALE PROPOSED PROJECT AREA
(as indicated in Initial Proposal)



PROPOSED PROJECT AREA

Currently, the proposed project area consists of the following parcels (see *FIGURE 1 – SCOUT LAKE MULTIPLE TIMBER SALE PROPOSED PROJECT AREA*): Sections 3, 6, 8, 18, 20, 22, 26, 28, 30, 34, and 36, Township 23 North, Range 17 West; Sections 18, 19, 20, 21, 28, 29, 30, 32, 33, and 34, Township 24 North, Range 17 West; and Section 24 and 36, Township 23 North, Range 18 West. Since the initial proposal, the proposed project area has decreased from 25,000 acres to 12,530 acres. The estimated actual treatment area within the revised project area would likely range from 2,880 to 4,200 acres. One parcel added was Section 27 Township 24 North, Range 17 West. Sections that were initially a part of the project, but were later eliminated following further review and consideration of project objectives include: Sections 10, 19, and 32 Township 23 North, Range 17 West and Section 36 Township 24 North, Range 18 West.

FIGURE 2 - SCOUT LAKE MULTIPLE TIMBER SALE PROPOSED PROJECT AREA (current)



PROJECT TIMELINE

The following dates display the Scout Lake Multiple Timber Sale Project Timeline. Although the ID Team has specified particular times and methods for public input, public input is not limited to these times; the ID Team accepts comments throughout the development of the project.

ID Team Established	March 2010
Public Scoping Initiated	April 16 through May 16, 2010
Issues Developed	Summer and Fall 2010 (and ongoing)
Public Field Tour	October 20, 2010
Newsletter #1	November 22, 2010
Alternatives Developed	Fall/Winter 2010/2011
Environmental Analysis and Writing of Draft EIS	Winter 2010/2011 and Spring 2011
Newsletter #2	Spring/Summer 2011
Draft EIS (DEIS) Internal Review	Summer 2011
Draft EIS Published for Public Review	Fall 2011
Final EIS Published	Winter 2011/2012
Record of Decision Published	Winter 2011/2012

CONTACT INFORMATION

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WHERE ARE WE NOW?

At this stage in developing the project, the ID Team has a thorough understanding of the existing conditions of the resources in the project area. This understanding, combined with the identification of

issues presented internally and by the public, enables the ID Team to begin developing alternatives.

Alternative development will include a full description of a no-action alternative (current conditions) and a reasonable range of action

alternatives. The no-action alternative will serve as a baseline against which the action alternatives will be compared. Prescriptions for stands, transportation plans, and mitigation measures will be developed by the ID Team for each action alternative.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR PUBLIC INPUT

The ID Team will strive to provide the public ample opportunity to comment during the development stages of this project. If you wish to participate, the following opportunities should be considered:

- If you did not comment during the initial scoping period and have issues additional to those listed under *Issue Development* (page 3), send your comments to the Contact Information, above.

- If you would like future mailings regarding this project and have not previously contacted us, send your name, mailing address, and a request to be included on the mailing list to Contact Information, above.

What's To Come....

Newsletter #2 – In the spring/summer of 2011, the ID Team will distribute another newsletter detailing the alternatives developed for this project.

DEIS - The ID Team anticipates that the DEIS will be available for public review during the fall of 2011. During this time, interested individuals will have 30 days to review and submit comments on the DEIS.

Thanks for your participation and interest in this project!



Dept Natural Resources and Conservation

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